

Boston Eight Hour League,

ITS

OBJECTS AND WORK.

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT,

CONTAINING THE

PLAN AND ESTIMATES

OF A

Free Hall for Workingmen and Workingwomen.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY THE BOSTON EIGHT HOUR LEAGUE,

1872.

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At the Second Subscription Anniversary of the Boston Eight Hour League, Jan. 17, the following Report was presented by the President. At a subsequent meeting five hundred copies were ordered to be printed.

Letters containing contributions to the Free Hall, or Printing Fund, should be addressed to the President, GEO. E. MCNEILL, Bureau of Labor, State House, Boston, Mass.

The following pamphlets will be forwarded free of postage, upon receipt of fifteen cents.

"Meaning of the Eight Hour Movement."—Ira Steward.

"The Just demand of Labor, a more equal distribution of Wealth."—F. A. HINCKLEY.

"The Relations of Christianity to Labor and Capital."
E. H. ROGERS.

"The Voice of Labor, a Poem."—E. R. PLACE.

Address,

MARY B. STEWARD, Secretary,

99 River St., Cambridgeport, Mass.

19 Apr 1872

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE BOSTON
EIGHT HOUR LEAGUE.

No. 14 BROMFIELD STREET,
BOSTON, January 17, 1872. }

In presenting the Report of the work of the League for the past year, I have thought it desirable to recall to your minds the history of our organization, to the end that we may be encouraged and stimulated to further exertion.

The first preliminary meeting was held at the house of a friend, on May 19th, 1869. The most prominent reasons assigned for the formation of the League, were that there was no organization in the interest of labor, specially adapted for the advocacy of radical labor truth; that organizations having general and not definite aims, lose power; that to create thought, the brains of the country must first be arrested, and that to do this the persistent adhesion to a single point is absolutely essential. In the minds of those present, the Eight Hour Idea seemed to contain the single issue, because its theory led directly

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to the root of the evil, Poverty, and because it was the first step towards its extinction.

At the second meeting, the company voted to organize ; meetings were then held at the houses of the members. On the 26th of July a temporary organization was effected, and on the evening of August 4th, the same officers were permanently elected. On the 2d of September we met for the first time in this room and adopted the Constitution, of which the following is the

PREAMBLE.

That Wealth may be more equally distributed, as well as more rapidly produced, Poverty abolished, Human Life lengthened, getting a living made easy, and Co-operative labor become the general rule in the production of wealth ; that profits upon labor, the Wages system, the wages and employing classes and interest on money may finally cease to exist ; together with Idleness, Speculation, Class Legislation, Financial Convulsions, Intemperance, Prostitution and War, through the gradual operation of the natural and moral causes which more leisure for the mass of laborers is sure to set in motion, are among the more prominent considerations in the argument for the Eight-Hour System."

Our first public effort was the printing and circulating of Petitions for an Eight Hour Law, followed by hearings before the joint Special Committee on Labor of the Legislature. These

hearings were conducted by a Committee of the League, and addressed by the members.

In January of the next year, 1870, the League called a public meeting of the friends of the Ten Hour Bill, at No. 3 Tremont Row. As a result of that effort, a public meeting was held at the Meionaon, presided over by the Rev. Gilbert Haven, and addressed by Rev. J. B. Dunn, Charles Cowley, Esq., and others.

In February, a Convention was held at Natick, many of the members of the League attending and conducting the meeting. This was a financial failure, owing largely to local causes.

At the regular meetings of the League discussions upon Poverty, the cause and cure of Intemperance, Wages, Co-operation, Woman's Work, Suffrage, Finance, etc., followed each other, interspersed by essays and poems by the members.

In May, an Eight Hour Convention was held in Horticultural Hall. The morning and evening meetings were interesting and well attended. In the evening the hall was packed, hundreds having no standing room. The papers gave fair reports and printed the Resolutions, which were prepared and presented by Wendell Phillips.

The history of the League during the remainder of the year, would amount to a relation of discussions and essays, worthy of a place in this report but necessarily omitted for want of time and space.

Early in January, 1871, the League again circulated petitions, and memorialized the Legislature, conducting the hearings before the Legislative Committee, and brought the attention of the public to the consideration of our demand. Some of the papers printed our memorial in full and commented very candidly upon the claims embraced therein.

In May, a Mass Labor Convention was held, under our auspices, in Horticultural Hall. The meetings were not so fully attended as before, but, financially, the Convention was a success.

In September, the League sent an Address, by delegates, to the great Eight Hour Convention and Procession of the workingmen in New York.

The Address was forwarded to one hundred and fifty different papers, and was printed, in full, by some of them, and afterwards translated into seven different languages and published by the reform papers of Germany, Italy, Switzerland, France and Spain.

Following this the League, has, through its members, addressed religious reformatory, and social science societies, upon the Labor Question, as well as assisted in the publication and circulation of essays and addresses.

We have also addressed, by circular, each member of the present Senate and House of Representatives, setting forth our claim for Legislation,—forwarded a protest to our delegation in Congress against the repeal of the Eight Hour Law, sent out petitions to interested parties for circulation, appealed to trade unions and working-men, and have in other ways sought to compel public attention to a careful hearing of our theory of the subject.

Having long felt the need of a place where the Labor Problem could be discussed with freedom, a committee was appointed for the purpose of procuring

A FREE HALL FOR WORKING MEN AND WOMEN.

A circular, of which the following is an abstract, was addressed to some one hundred persons, nineteen of whom have responded to our request for funds:

"The Labor Question has assumed such proportions as to demand the most thorough and impartial examination and consideration. The unusual awakening of the Working Classes is everywhere apparent. The wealthy and educated classes, looking on from their position of evident comfort and security, are amazed at the combinations of laborers, and the apparent despotism of their methods of protection and relief. The Working-men themselves, ignorant of the causes operating to their disadvantage, combine in Trades' Unions, and other organizations, and by crude and sometimes unintelligent methods, attempt to check the tendency to make men cheaper.

However ill-advised their attempts may be, the Trade Union is, in most cases, the only school where the working man learns what he knows of Social Science or Political Economy. The discussion of Wages, Hours of Labor, Laws of Trade and Commerce, etc., must and does have an educating influence. It is because of the long and deeply felt need of larger and freer opportunities for discussion, not associated with the narrow spirit of special trade or calling, and not accompanied with the prejudice against Trade Societies, so general among the Employing Classes, that a Committee was appointed to raise funds for the purpose of opening a hall free to all who will fairly discuss these important questions.

The hall will be under the management of the **BOSTON EIGHT HOUR LEAGUE**, an association having no party purposes, as an organization.

It is also desirable to print tracts and essays of the workingmen, so that the world may know of what labor complains, and what is proposed as a remedy.

To accomplish these results, it is necessary to raise the

sum of five thousand dollars, a sum insignificant compared with the importance of the work.

Our object is to secure a hearing, and on this account we appeal to candid fellow-citizens, who may not now sympathize with our cause. The help they give, need imply nothing beyond a willingness to promote this important inquiry, and to give the workmen, who have not the advantage of wealth, ‘fair play’ in stating their case.

An Annual Report, containing a full account of receipts and expenditures, will be sent to each subscriber.”

The following named gentlemen endorsed the plan, and permitted the use of their names as reference :

• His EXCELLENCY WILLIAM CLAFLIN,
Hon. CHARLES SUMNER,
Hon. WILLIAM GASTON.

The following plan and estimates were sent with the above :

“ A hall centrally located, with two ante-rooms, capable of accommodating three hundred persons, the ante-rooms so arranged as to be thrown into one, and suitable for reading-rooms and committee meetings,—the rent not to exceed two thousand dollars; fitting and furnishing the whole, one thousand five hundred; one thousand as a fund for printing tracts, essays, and reports of meetings; five hundred deposited for contingencies.

It is believed that after the first year, the collections and contributions at the hall will pay the current expenses.

No societies of a partisan or sectarian nature admitted to its use.

Rules such as govern all well regulated halls.

1st. The hall to be advertised as "to be let" at cost of heating and lighting and keeping in order for three evenings in the week, to societies of Working-men and Working-women.

2d. A free public discussion upon Labor Questions, including that of Woman's Work and Wages, one evening in each week.

3d. A free public Temperance meeting one evening in each week.

4th. Sunday evening lectures by clergymen and others upon any reform subject.

5th. The hall to be kept open certain hours of the day as a reading room.

6th. The reading room to be furnished by contributions, and free meetings to be supported by collections.

The several meetings shall be under charge of special committees, consisting of men, or women, or men and women, as the case may be; the temperance meeting, by known temperance men; Sunday evening and other lectures, under the control of the hall committee. Any evening, for which the hall is not engaged, will be filled by such lectures as the committee may be able to obtain."

The sum of money subscribed at this time amounts to six hundred and ten dollars,—three hundred and ten of which is paid in and deposited.

The need of such a hall is more than ever manifest. The Church and the Lyceum Plat-

form are closed to us, and will be until our question becomes as popular as Suffrage or Temperance. An appeal has been made to some of the churches in this city, the most liberal and the most orthodox, but without success. Anna Dickinson may speak of "Demagogues and Workingmen," but no working man can be allowed to reply,—and this in a pulpit that had been refused us after a promise that, should our references prove good, the clergyman would feel indebted for the opportunity. The references are acknowledged good, but the cause awaits a hearing.

Thanks to the Free Congregational Church of Lynn, the radical truth had a hearing from their pulpit, and the Rev. Warren H. Cudworth, of East Boston, gave the use of his pulpit to one of our number, who read therefrom his excellent essay on Labor.

Having failed to procure the requisite sum by circular appeals, the committee contemplate engaging a suitable person to canvass for the required amount. A demand for so small a sum as five thousand dollars, for an object so worthy and essential as that of a Free Hall, where, without prejudice or party feeling, the

great problem of labor can be fairly discussed and considered, should meet with a prompt and ready response.

All to whom we have appealed have confessed the plan excellent, and many have expressed a wish that the world may hear of labor's complaint from labor men and women who have made the problem their study and thought for years. The apathy of the benevolent wealthy towards a movement that looks to causes rather than effects, may be explained by the unpopularity of such movements; while any request for funds from a society engaged in a merely remedial work, meets with a ready response.

Marked exceptions are those gentlemen, who, declaring that they did not agree with us in our theory or claims, were yet willing that our cause should have a fair hearing.

First among these is Ex-Governor William Claflin, who, whenever appealed to in the name of free discussion, always gave us his contribution of money as well as his valuable suggestions, and use of his name. Our plan was first submitted to him, and then to the Hon. Charles Sumner, who granted the use of his honored name as a reference, and subscribed to the

fund. His Honor, the Mayor, Wm. Gaston, as readily complied with both requirements. The following is the list of subscribers:

WM. CLAFLIN	\$50.00.
CHARLES SUMNER	50.00.
WM. GASTON	50.00.
SAMUEL HOOPER	50.00.
GEO. F. HOAR	50.00.
HORACE BINNEY SARGENT	50.00.
RICHARD H. DANA, JR.,	50.00.
E. S. TOBEY	50.00.
WRIGHT & POTTER	50.00.
WM. B. SPOONER	50.00.
WM. B. WADMAN	50.00.
WM. ENDICOTT	25.00.
GEO. B. LORING	25.00.

The following have also contributed to the fund:

H. D. CUSHING.
 NEWTON TALBOT.
 MRS. OLIVIA FLYNT.
 H. H. COOLIDGE.
 THOS. WENTWORTH HIGGINSON.
 MOODY MERRILL.

Others have signified their intention of giving, but have delayed until spring. It is hoped to increase the amount to fifteen hundred dollars in a few months, so that by next fall we

shall be enabled to commence the experiment according to the plan.

In addition to these contributions to the fund, I have the pleasure of recording the names of the following gentlemen, who have in the past contributed towards our Conventions. Foremost among them is the name of one who, to his contributions of money, has lent the greater contribution of his voice — Wendell Phillips. Next in order, comes the contribution of one hundred dollars from Hon. B. F. Butler, a sum, as he said, to make up any deficiency that might occur from our Convention, or to aid in another. Other small sums, to the amount of about one hundred dollars, have been contributed during the year, and have been expended in the agitation of the question, as set forth in the early part of this report.

The great good done by the circulation of essays and tracts cannot be over-estimated, and thanks are due to members for their voluntary contributions of pamphlets. The work so well begun in this direction, should be followed by the publication of other documents, and in stereotyping such as may warrant the outlay. To do this the League needs

A PRINTING FUND.

The only present source of revenue for this purpose, is in the increase of honorary members at ten cents each. From this source and the contributions of members, the fund has now reached the sum of \$43.65, an amount so utterly inadequate for the purposes of the League, that I would earnestly call your attention to the importance of increasing it, so as to enable the committee on printing to receive essays and tracts for publication.

Such has been the work of the League. Let us, in remembering what has been done, not forget what there is yet to do. The marked ignorance upon our question, evinced in the pulpit, on the platform, in the halls of legislation, in the public press, and in the general public mind, should urge us forward to the performance of our duty. Continuing, as heretofore, faithful to the idea that a reduction of the hours of labor increases wages without increasing cost, and so diminishes profits upon labor, thus giving a better distribution of wealth and culture, without disturbing or discussing the wealth already accumulated ; that poverty and extreme wealth are

causes, not results, of intemperance, prostitution and crime ; and, that to abolish poverty, we must first operate upon the present means by which wealth is distributed, so that the laborer shall have a larger, and capital a smaller share of the products, until profits upon labor shall be so small, that co-operation in industry shall be as simple and easy, as corporation of wealth.

This is the work before us. No northern passage by a frozen pole is the object of our search ; but to seek out a way for the masses through the desert of Poverty, to fields of green and springs of running water, where want shall no more incite appetite and passion to deeds of violence and wrong, and where extreme wealth shall melt away and pampered luxury no more debauch, debase and corrupt the people.

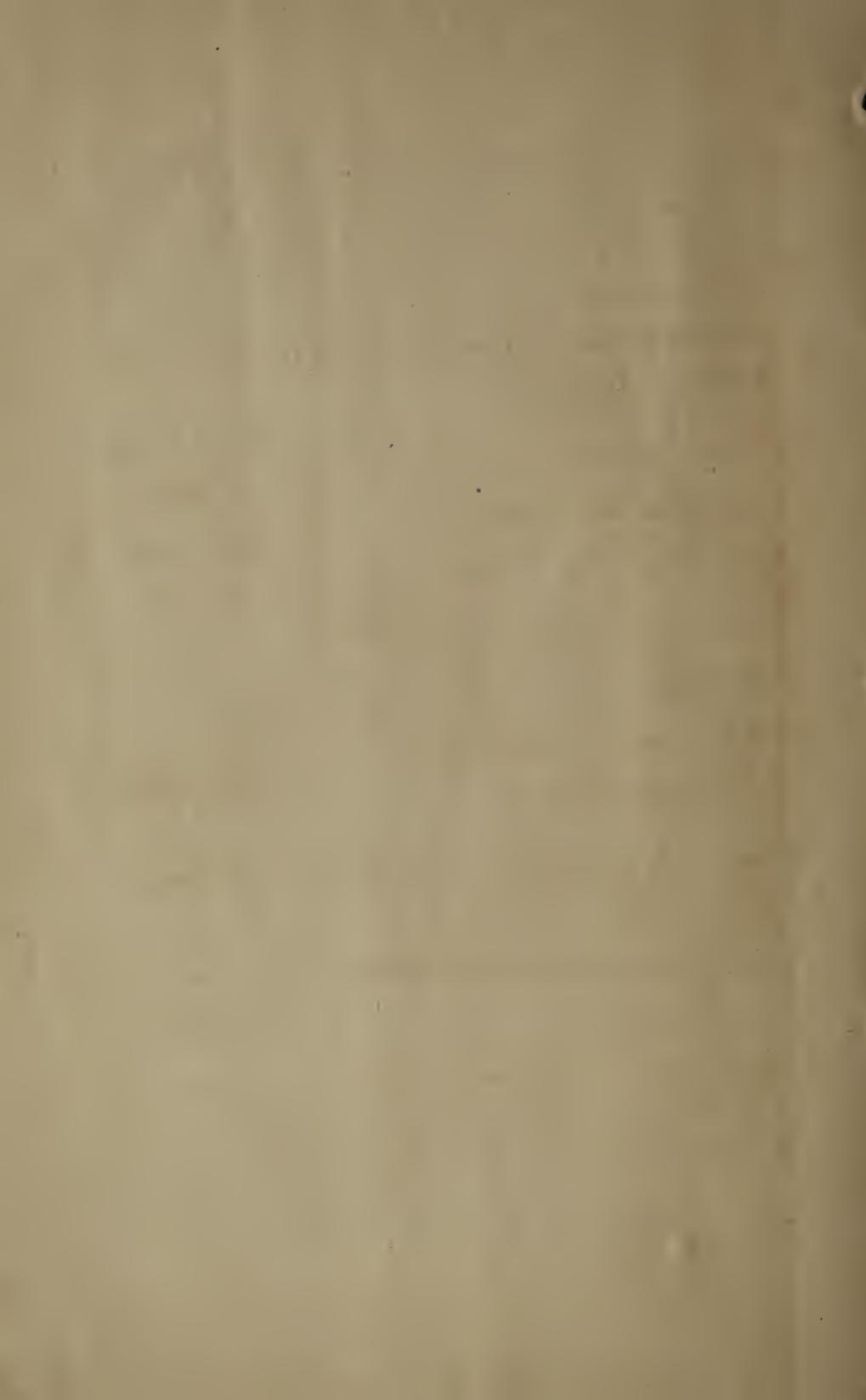
Keeping in view the haven of our rest where poverty and extreme wealth are not known, let us not lose sight of the humble method, of the first important, yet apparently insignificant step, toward that result.

Grander names may crown our sister reforms ; wealth and talent may pour their willing contributions into the laps of their advocates.

Poverty of wealth, of talent, of culture, of

time, may be ours ; but yet, as of old, "The rejected stone shall become the chief stone of the corner," and the Eight Hour movement be hailed as the salvation of co-operative government, the creator of co-operative industry, and the harbinger of Co-operative Christianity.

GEORGE E. McNEILL.



The undersigned are prepared to deliver Lectures upon
the following subjects.

Poverty — A Cause.	}	G. E. MCNEILL, State House, Boston, Mass.
Intemperance — A Result.		
Eight Hours — The Method.		
Co-operative Christianity — The Aim.		
Eight Hours a Day's Work,	}	E. H. ROGERS, Chelsea, Mass.
The Relations of Christianity to		
Labor and Capital,		
Educators in a Republic,— F. A. HINCKLEY, Dorchester, Mass.		
A Reduction of Hours an Increase of Wages,	}	IRA STEWARD, Cambridgeport, Mass.
Extreme Poverty and Extreme Wealth,		



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